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The Years That Are Past.



A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MARK, SMITH'S BERMUDA, ON APRIL
25TH (ST. MARK'S DAY), 1898, AT THE COMMEMORATION OF
THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS OPENING
FOR DIVINE SERVICE,

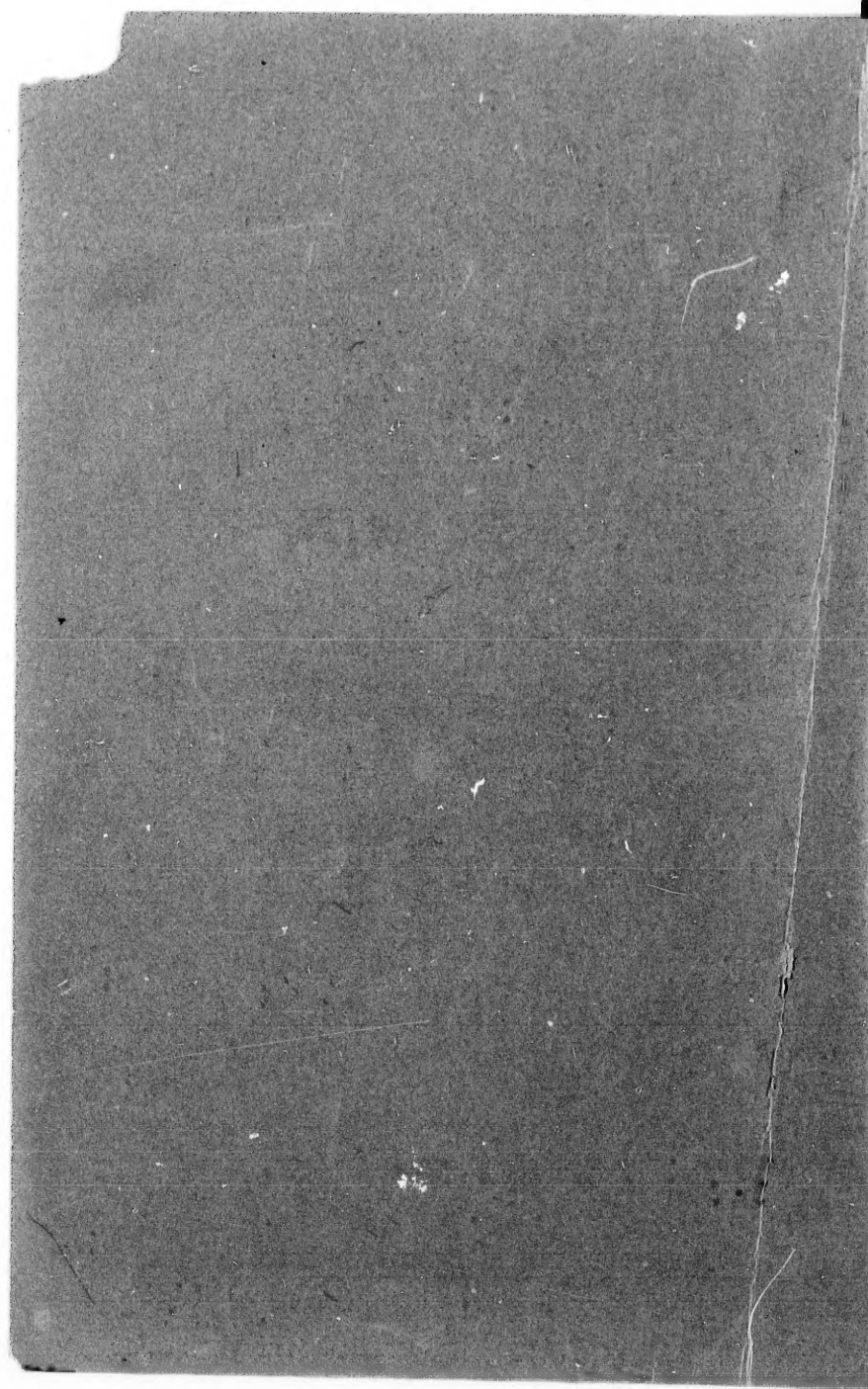
BY LLEWELLYN JONES, D.D.,

Bishop of Newfoundland and Bermuda.



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"I have considered the days of old : and the years that are past."

Ps. lxxvii. 5. *Prayer Book Version.*

AS the World grows older, commemorations of past events, jubilees, centenaries, and celebrations of epochs still more remote than these terms describe, rapidly increase upon us. It is well for nations and peoples to look back on those great eras which have been new departures in their progress, turning points in their history, and to gather up the many lessons which they teach. It is less than twelve months, for instance, since the English-speaking peoples, in all parts of the world, were thankfully commemorating the completion of the sixty years of Her Majesty's reign, a reign more fruitful in beneficent events than any that has gone before. And in our Bermuda Cathedral many of you, my brethren, assembled in company with your fellow subjects, of all denominations, for a grand and solemn act of thanksgiving, which I am assured will not soon be forgotten by those who were privileged to take part in it.

To-day we are met together, not merely as loyal subjects of the Queen, but rather as true and faithful members of the Church : not to recount the progress which our nation has made in political, or social, or scientific, or commercial fields, but rather to commemorate the advance of that Kingdom of which we are all citizens—the Kingdom that is not of this world, that is older than the oldest of earthly dynasties and is destined to survive them all.

We are met, on this, the Festival of its patron Saint, to celebrate the Jubilee of this House of God, and with Psalm and Hymn, Anthem and Te Deum to praise our Heavenly Father for the mercies He has vouchsafed to this parish and this congregation during the fifty "years that are past." This building was opened for Divine Service on the 23rd April (Easter Sunday), 1848, and early in the following year it was consecrated to the glory of God and in honour of His Evangelist, St. Mark. Its predecessor stood for more than two centuries on the south side of the road within the enclosure which is now the parish burying ground. When in 1844 the roof began to shew signs of decay it was at first thought that by raising the walls and erecting a new roof the defect might be remedied. Further examination, however, revealed the fact that the walls themselves were in an unsafe condition, and it was decided to build an entirely new Church with as little delay as possible. The operations commenced in 1846 and were brought to a successful conclusion within 18 months. During that period Services were held in the little school house at the foot of Collector's Hill.

This Church, however, when opened for service 50 years ago, was very far from being what we see it now. During this half century it has engaged the loving attention of various benefactors, and has received from time to time many additions, improvements and ornamentations. I may mention the most prominent. In 1860, or thereabouts, the Porch was built. In 1878 the Spire was erected. In 1879 the Bell was presented. The Chancel was erected in 1884. The Buttresses were added in 1887, and in the same year the stained glass Windows, which adorn the Chancel, were inserted as memorials of departed parishioners and others. The Organ, now in use, was introduced in 1891. In the following year a new Stone Finial and a Cross of dignified propor-

tions were erected. Several new articles of furniture have been presented of late years, the most recent and important of which—the Holy Table and Reredos—have been this morning dedicated to God's Honour and Service.

These, my brethren, are matters which I cannot but regard as gratifying signs of healthy life, for I look to the condition of our sacred buildings as the most important of all outward aids to religion, and the surest sign of the interest it excites. Turning from these, let us look for a moment at the state of things which prevailed in early days here with regard to the *ministrations* of the Church. Since 1627, when there is the first record of a Clergyman officiating in these parishes, there have been thirty "doing duty" up to the present, for longer or shorter periods. In the early part of the present century, Pembroke, Devonshire, Smith's and Hamilton formed one living under one Rector! Just think of it, one clergyman responsible for the care of all the souls between Spanish Point and the Causeway! Evening services were almost unknown in those days—at least in country parishes, and we can well picture to ourselves how few and far between must have been the opportunities for Public Worship which the members of the Church could possibly enjoy under such an arrangement. The last Clergyman upon whom such a burden was laid was the Rev. Alex. Ewing, grandfather of your present Rector.

In 1820 an Act of the Legislature provided for the division of the Parishes to the Westward of the St. George's Ferry into four livings, and thenceforward Smith's and Hamilton became one living, and Pembroke and Devonshire another. Three quarters of a century have passed since then, and I venture to think that the time has come when a further division is necessary. The day has gone by when our people were satisfied with one Service on Sunday—alternately morning, and afternoon. They demand a more liberal supply of the means of grace. They need more regular pastoral visitations in their homes, more frequent Services in God's House. If their Mother Church fails to provide these, they will seek them outside her borders. Speaking as the one, to whom under God, has been committed the spiritual oversight of the Church in these Islands, I have no hesitation in recording my conviction that the Church in Bermuda is undermanned, and that each parish ought to have its own Rector. Is this a mere dream? So I doubt not to some of those who lived here 75 years ago appeared the proposal to separate Smiths and Hamilton from Pembroke and Devonshire. But it was done nevertheless. Is it too much to hope that in the near future a serious effort may be made in the direction which I have indicated, and that the opening of the 20th century may see at least a Celebration of Holy Communion and Morning and Evening Prayer on every Sunday in every parish Church in Bermuda?

And now my Reverend Brothers, I have been speaking of "the days of old and the years that are past,"—what shall we say of our own times? We cannot doubt that there has been real progress. We could not altogether have escaped the influence of the rising tide of Christian life which is blessing the length and breadth of the Anglican Communion. But in its most important aspects, it is not easy to estimate the amount of progress in the work of the Church. There are no milestones on the highways of God. Yet I trust you can share with me in the humble

conviction that by the blessing of God, we have been gaining ground, not only in winning souls for Him from the ranks of the careless and ungodly, but also in developing a deeper knowledge and a higher spiritual tone among the people committed to our charge. And for this let us thank God to-day.

The work before us is vast in its scope and infinite in its importance: beset with perils, and surrounded by difficulties, fruitful in disappointments and opposed by many foes: yet what true servant of Christ would exchange it for a life of idle ease and selfish enjoyment, nay, for any other life which the world can offer? Surely it is the grandest, the noblest, the happiest of all.

Brethren in Christ, both Clergy and Laity,—there is a great work before the Church to do. Never was there a greater. There are great and precious promises of which she is the undoubted heir. "Glorious things, indeed, are spoken of thee, thou city of God." "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." I believe, moreover, that she shall "arise and shine for her light is come." I believe that the time, yea, the set time is come, when God will have mercy upon her. I believe, moreover, that this branch of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, to which we belong, has a great mission, and a great promise, and a glorious future before her, not in these islands only but throughout the world. "Lift up your eyes round about and see." Think of the four Lambeth Conferences that have been held during the last thirty years, and of the Church extension which the increasing attendance at those Conferences denotes. In 1867 seventy-six Bishops were present: in 1878 one hundred: in 1888 one hundred and forty-five: and in 1897 the number had risen to one hundred and ninety four. Think of the teeming millions of human souls in other lands beside our own—in Europe, and Asia, and Africa, and America, and Australia, and in the isles of the sea—who were represented there last year by those 194 Bishops gathered from every part of the earth, and every one of them exercising Episcopal functions—millions of human souls, who are hearing our voices and speaking our tongue, and submitting themselves to our government and even learning our Bible. All these things have been given to us. The primal blessing, "Increase and multiply and replenish the earth," has been renewed to us. The great command, "Go teach all nations, baptizing them," comes down in deeper, louder tones to our church. "Lo, I am with you alway" is assured to us and to Her. How shall we do the work? How shall we reap the blessing?

My Brethren, we must first of all take larger and grander views. Bermuda is an independent Diocese, that is to say, it is not connected with any Province, or group of other Dioceses. There are some who consider this an unmixed advantage, but I see in it at least this danger, that it has a tendency to make our churchmanship insular and selfish: that while we are thinking of and consulting for the welfare of the Church in Bermuda, we are very apt to forget the advancement of "the Holy Church throughout all the world." And yet, my Brethren, towards that advancement we ought to contribute. No portion of the Church can stand aloof and say "This is no concern of ours." The blessing and the command and the work of which I have spoken are for the whole Church, and if we would share the blessing, we must obey the command

and join in the work. How then shall we do our part towards bringing about the glorious consummation? In other words, what are our duties as Churchmen at the present time? Let us conclude by enquiring.

First, let us study to avoid divisions and disunion among ourselves. Poor hope for that army that goes forth to the engagement distracted with conflicting orders, paralyzed by internal jealousies. Little preferences of our own may well be sacrificed to the pressing need for harmony, for unity, for an unbroken front in the work we have to do.

Next, Churchmen must shake off their apathy, and begin to take a larger and more active interest in Church affairs. They must inform themselves about Church questions. They must place more of their time and means at the disposal of the Church. The Clergy must lead them—as they are bound to do—but we of the Clergy can do very little without your aid and sympathy.

Then, Churchmen, too, have their political duties. There is one supreme duty that comes before all others, and our blessed Lord expressed it when He said: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." It is the duty of putting the interests of Jesus Christ—of His faith, His truth, His religion, His Church—the highest interests of man, in short, which His truth, faith, church, religion, aim at and seek—before all others. If the closest personal family ties, then political and party ties must all recede and step aside where those interests are in question. We are Christians and Churchmen first, politicians afterwards and subordinately. We entirely refuse to tie the church to any political party. She is above all parties; she seeks the good of all in every party. She is above all parties, but she and her claims come first with us: and when she is attacked and endangered all other considerations must give way to her support.

But Churchmen have other duties yet. There are things that need correction in the church it is said. Be it so. I should expect to find such things, and I should find them doubtless both in the Church and in the sects. The garden of God will be nowhere without weeds. Go to the New Testament and you will read of a Demas who loved the world, and a Diotrephes who loved pre-eminence. But whatever among us may need correction it is our earnest wish to correct. We must seek to make the Church of England more efficient, more useful, more able to adapt herself to the changing wants of the day. We must build up the old waste places and restore the foundations of many generations. An active Church means a virtuous, orderly, righteous people. Still is it true that "Out of Zion comes deliverance." You serve your country when you serve your Church. To your love and your labours then I commend her.

And while at this time we thank God for many a devoted clergyman, and many a faithful layman who have gone before us in this parish and in this Diocese, and whom we commemorate in Holy Communion to-day, may their bright example animate us to tread the same path, and strive for the same reward. This will be the truest Thanksgiving, the truest Commemoration. Then will our Jubilee service be indeed acceptable to God, and its echoes shall be heard as echoes of joy and blessedness, through the ages of eternity.

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